Creating the Musical Identity and Style of Your Game

Penka Kouneva

GDC'2017

www.penkakouneva.com

Penka Kouneva - Composer

- Games - Prince of Persia: Forgotten Sands, Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen (theme by Steve Jablonsky)
- Steam, mobile and casual games - Rollers of the Realm, Cookie Jam 2
- Kennedy Space Center – NASA Astronauts Hall Of Fame complex

Penka Kouneva - Arranger

- Games (Sony's Bloodborne, Overwatch, Gears of War 2, 3, World of WarCraft, StarCraft II, Diablo III)
- Movies (Transformers, Elysium, Ninja Turtles 2)

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- Heart and soul of the game
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  - Genre
  - World(s)
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  - Gameplay
  - Story
  - Time
  - Location

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- Music makes gameplay a memorable experience
- Music sets apart your game from your competition
- Music elevates the production values of your game

Conceptual Talks Between Collaborators

- Vision of your game

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- Tone lineage (i.e., how similar games have been scored in the past?)
- Innovation and tradition

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- Your tastes as a developer

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Conceptual Talks between the Collaborators

- Your tastes as a developer
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- “Signature style” for your characters and game

“Style Guide” - Research

- What are the elements that will work for your score?

- What elements will not work?

MAYHEM

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“Mayhem” iOS game

Conceptual Guidance from Dev to Composer:

- Genre: Sci-Fi adventure (not-too-distant future)

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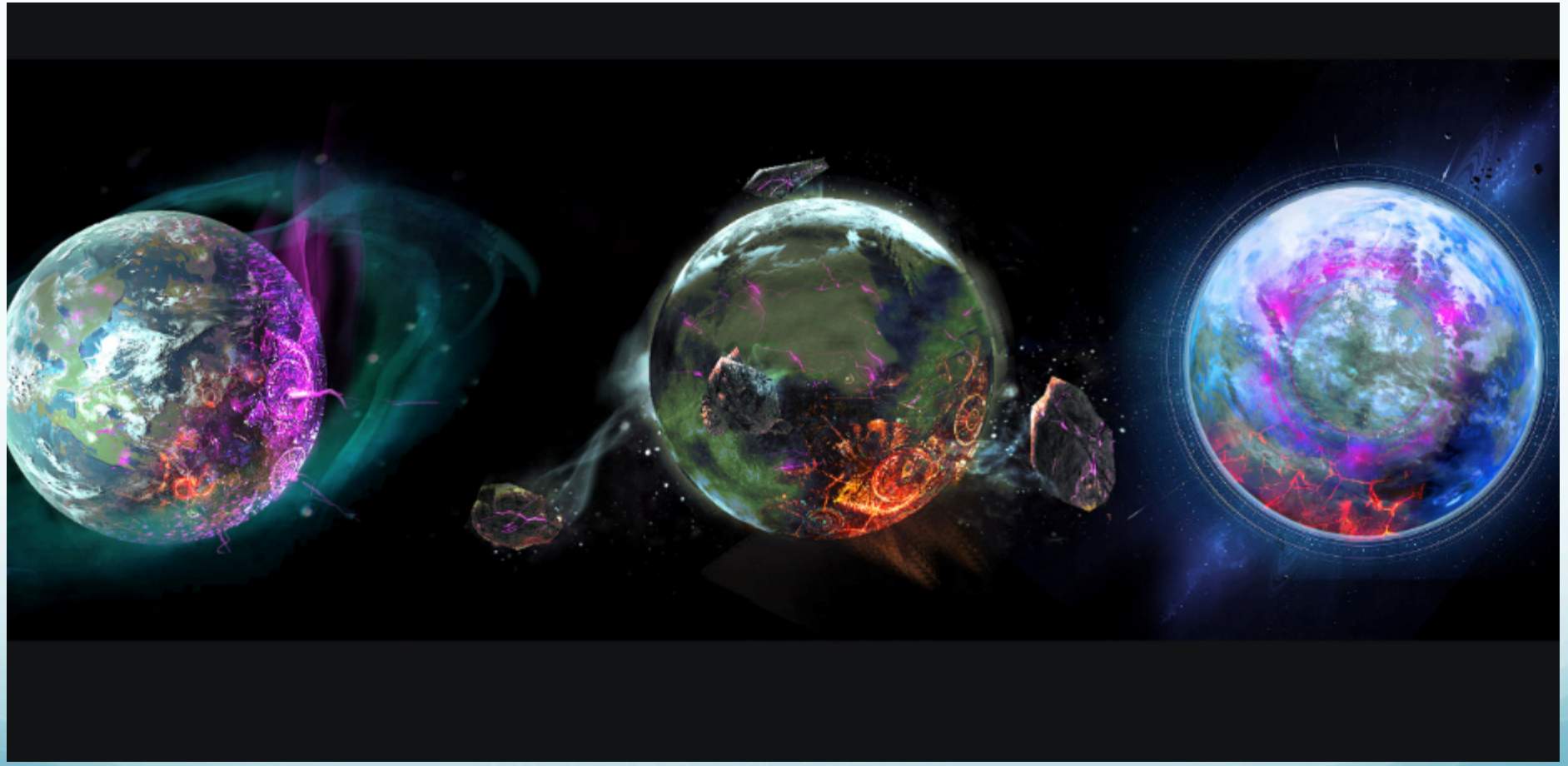
Conceptual Guidance from Dev to Composer:

- **Genre: Sci-Fi adventure (not-too-distant future)**
- **Costumes and weaponry blend the past and present**
- **(not advanced / sleek / too “sci-fi”)**
- **“More** *Aliens*, **less** *Star Wars*” **(quote from the dev)**

‘‘Mayhem’’ iOS game

- Conceptual Guidance:

- Visual style – blend of sci-fi and contemporary war game
- Music should be middle-ground too (sci-fi & action)
- Not too sci-fi (e.g., electronica only)



Music Guidelines from Devs to Composer

GLOBAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE SCORE:

- Music is the tertiary auditory element
- sound FX and environment ambiences take precedence

Music Guidelines from Devs to Composer

COMBAT CAMPAIGN TRACK - USE:

- A hybrid style - orchestra & electronica

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- Synth FX patches to suggest sci-fi

Music Guidelines from Devs to Composer

COMBAT TRACK – DON'T USE:

- No big soaring melodies
- No busy chord changes
- No bombastic choir (used in fantasy)

Play From 21 seconds

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Mayhem - Menu Music

YES:

- Much less stressful
- Serious and foreboding
- Subdued, not frenetic

NO:

- Massive choirs
- Thundering drums
- Loud string melodies

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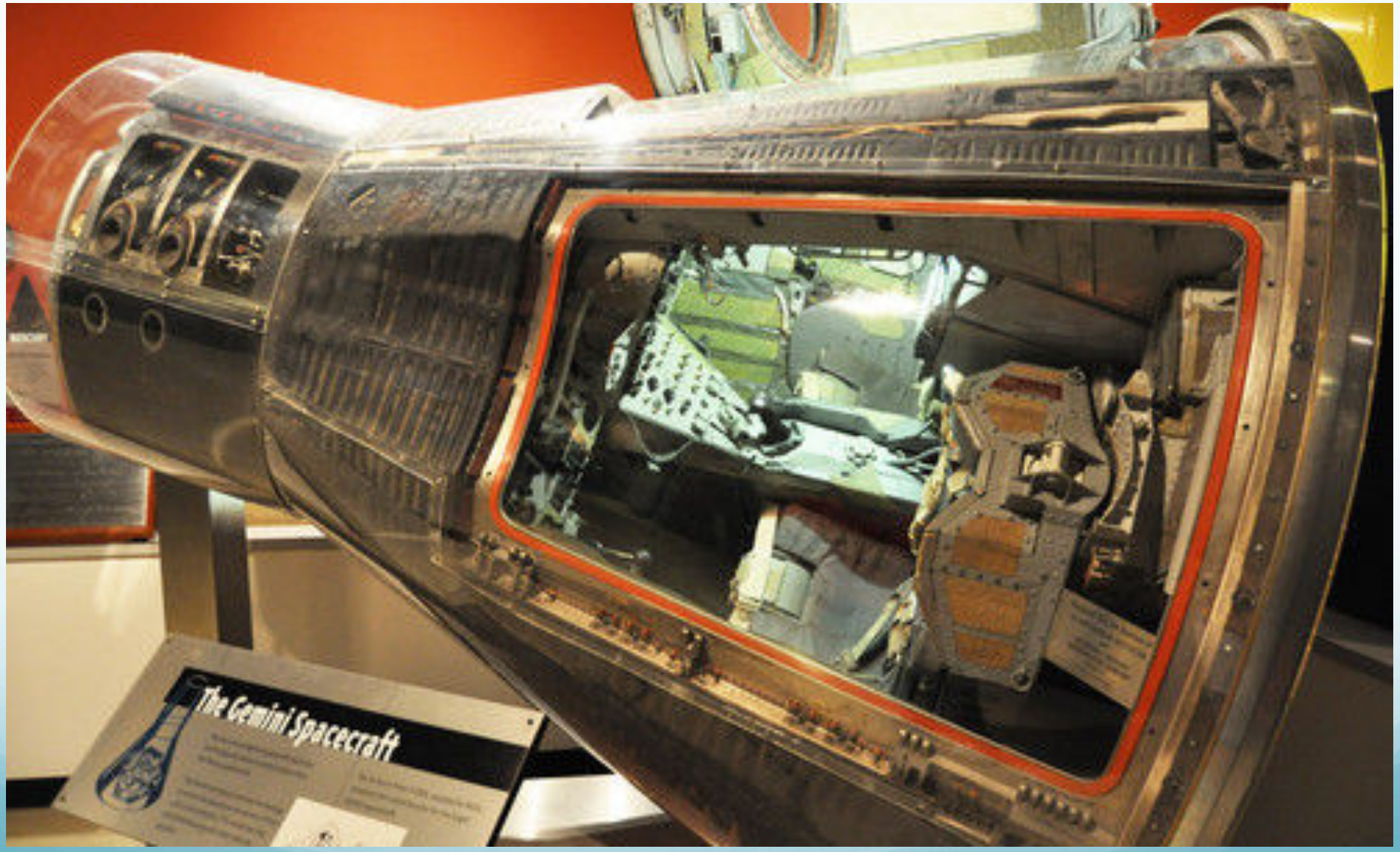
Gemini 8 – modern hybrid action track for peril / failed technology

Gemini 8 capsule



Neil Armstrong, David R. Scott – March 16, 1966

UNITED
STATES

US Astronaut Hall Of Fame

Gemini 8 – modern hybrid action track for peril / failed technology

- **space, joy**

US Astronaut Hall Of Fame

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US Astronaut Hall Of Fame

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US Astronaut Hall Of Fame

Gemini 8 – modern hybrid action track for peril / failed technology

- **space, joy**
- **action music for malfunctioning system**
- **ever-increasing tension**
- **higher stakes with every new musical phrase**
- **“defeated hero” for the end. The people’s lives are saved. They are still heroes. But the mission has failed**

KSC - Gemini 8 – 3D movie

- Client's initial "style guide" –

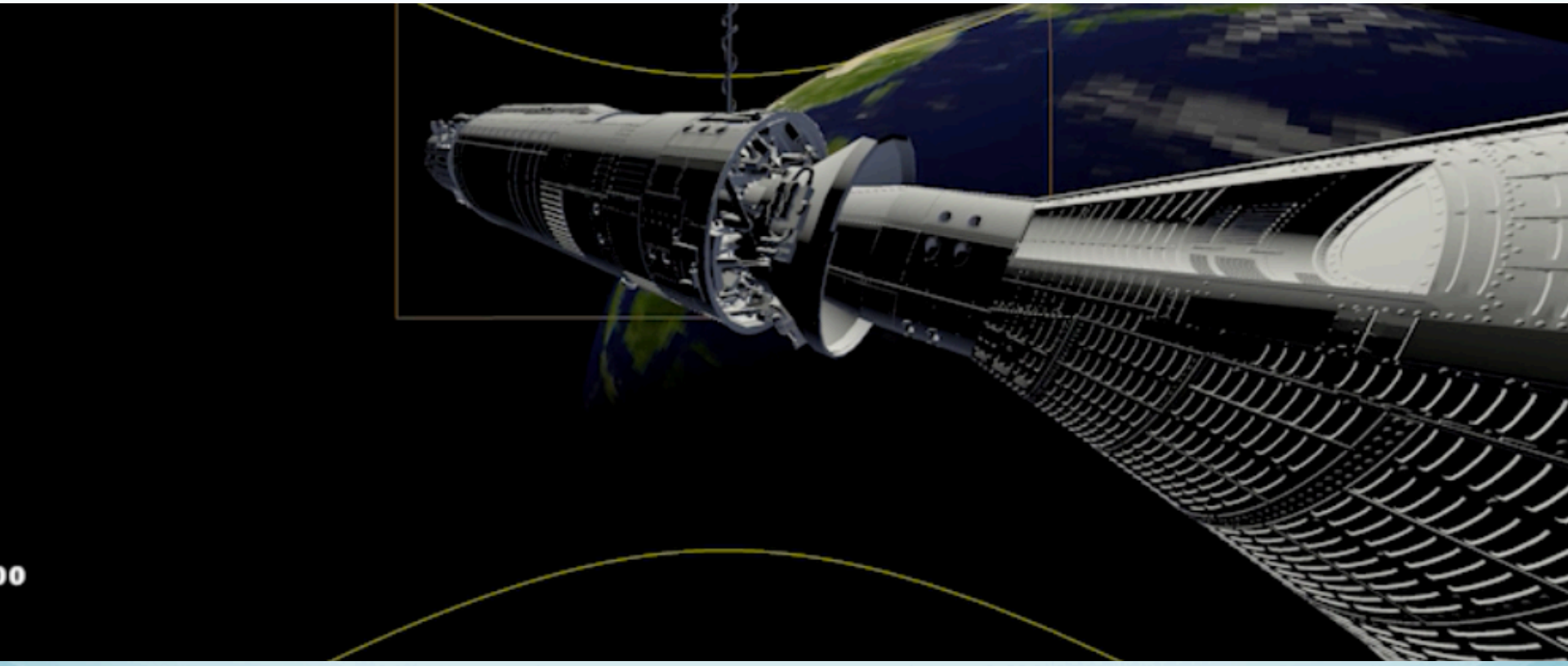
"The Right Stuff" (1983) – traditional

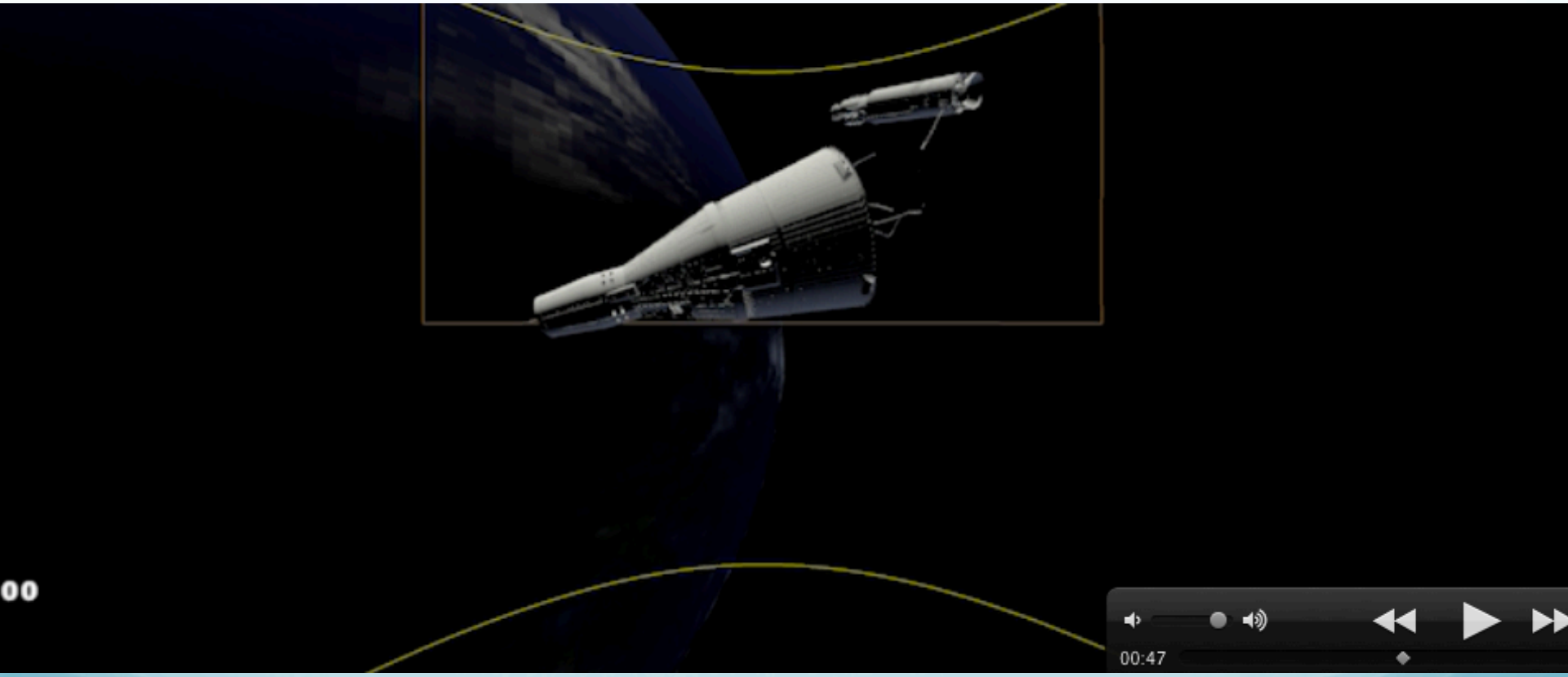
100% orchestra-only score by Bill Conti

- No choir

My approach

- Hybrid orchestra – modern and timeless
- The timeless element – traditional melodic themes for the heroes + orchestra
- The modern element – the arrangement and sound with busy percussion and synths

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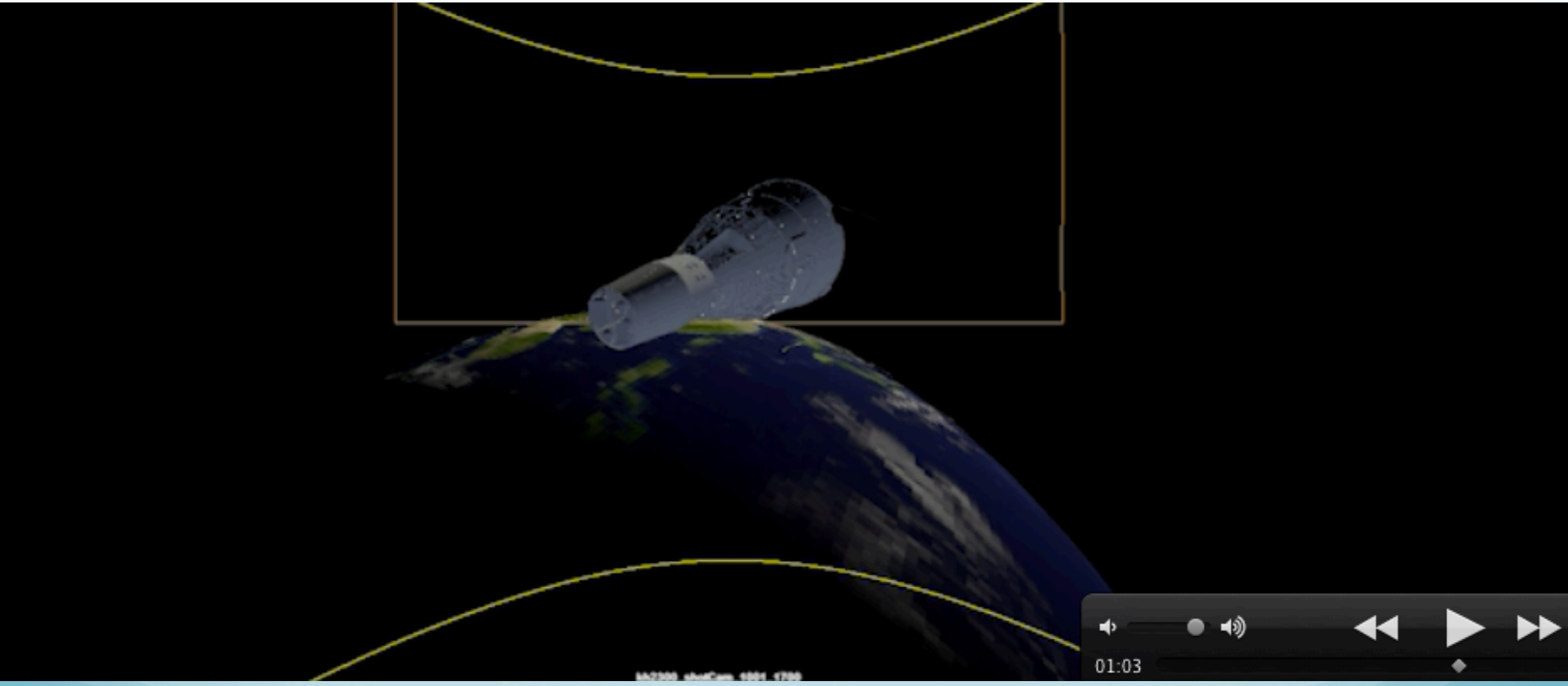
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KSC - Gemini 8 - structure

Beauty of space	Receive the message of malfunction	Peril, scrambling, trying to fix it	Agena and capsule undocking	Capsule spinning out of control – interior shots grave danger	Capsule spinning – showing earth spinning	Failed mission – alive heroes

AGENA
UNITED STATES
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2016.11.12

Q and A

Please fill out the Evaluations Forms. Thank you.

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On SoundCloud

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